

CHALARA ASH LATEST

Dr Terry Mabbett updates us with the recent news about Chalara ash dieback



Chalara ash dieback has been firing warning shots at the UK government's management plans but the two latest salvos were right on target.

The first shot from Wales hit one of the three main planks of Defra's Chalara Management Plan below the water line, while the salvo from Devon was a top deck direct hit.

First main plank of Defra's Chalara Management Plan (March 2013) is the

creation of a disease free zone of counties along the western edge of England comprising Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Gloucestershire and up through the West Midlands.

Underpinning the programme is assistance to forest and woodland owners of recently planted ash confirmed with chalara.

They will be given grants to dig up and destroy the ash trees and plant with

alternative species. General idea is to slow the westward spread of the disease from current hotbeds in East Anglia and Kent/ East Sussex.

Even if this 'generosity' had been extended to the amenity and landscape sectors including golf courses (Greenkeeper International May 2013), and used to cover all recently planted ash (healthy as well as infected), success was unlikely considering this pathogen is disseminated by airborne spores and the sheer ubiquity and frequency of its common ash host.

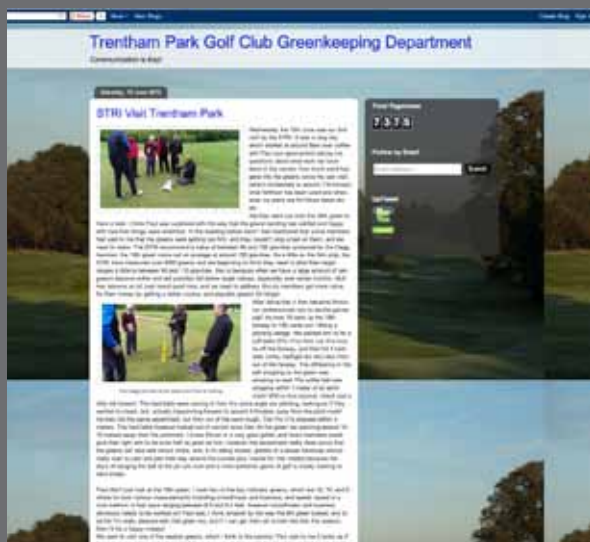
Recent events are proving this thinking to be right. In May 2013 Chalara ash dieback was found in the wider Welsh environment at Ferrybridge (south of Carmarthen town) in Carmarthenshire. This leaves the door wide open for spores to be picked up and carried eastwards into western England by strong south westerly prevailing winds.

But that is all 'red herring' thinking since chalara was actually identified in the west of England wider environment in July 2013 in woodland between Exeter and Tiverton in Devon.

Forestry Commission (FC) did not reveal the exact location, although BBC Devon said the outbreak was at Byway Farm near Tiverton. According to the BBC, FC said the disease must have been on these trees when they were planted in 1996/1997.

This is highly unlikely. After 16-17 years the disease would have already spread far and wide. In 1996/1997 Chalara ash dieback disease was still confined to Poland and Lithuania, and unlikely to have arrived that early in the UK on imported planting material. In those 16-17 years it has moved westwards from Poland to reach Pas de Calais in France.

BLOGGING AT TRENTHAM PARK



This month's featured blog is from Leigh Swann, Head Greenkeeper at Trentham Park Golf Club.

He started the blog using 'blogger' in January and has already had over 7,000 views – plus it's improving the communication between Leigh, his team and the members.

He said: "After improving the club's website the year before I wanted a clear concise way of communicating out to the membership.

"I also wanted to give them a way, and means of asking questions, and for me to answer them honestly and truthfully.

"I often get members stopping me on the course telling me how much they enjoyed reading it, and comment on how easy it is to understand. I think they appreciate the honesty.

"The thing that has worked out

best is the ability for members to comment on the blogposts. So if they don't understand anything they can always ask!

"I think an important thing is not to ignore the complaints that come through. If the greens are bad, then explain why!

"I use 'blogger' which is free and enables you to post pictures and videos to it completely free. It's connected to your Google account so everything blends in well, and is easy to use."

What advice would he give greenkeepers thinking of setting up a blog?

"Take your time deciding on what you want. Try to get it integrated into the club's website, so it's easier for your members to find."

See for yourself at <http://trentthamparkgolfclub.blogspot.co.uk>